DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 074 055 SP 006 281

TITLE	Changes in Self-Concept During the Student Teaching Experience. Research Report, Volume 2, No. 5.
INSTITUTION	Louisiana State Univ., Baton Rouge. Coll. of Education.
PUB DATE	Nov 72
NOTE	9p.
EDRS PRICE	MF-$0.65 HC-$3.29
DESCRIPTORS	Individual Characteristics; *Self Concept; *Self Concept Tests; *Student Teachers; *Student Teaching; Teacher Behavior; *Teaching Experience

ABSTRACT

The effect of the student teaching experience on self-concept was investigated. In the spring semester 1971-72, 260 students were enrolled in the student teaching courses in the College of Education, Louisiana State University (LSU). At the beginning and end of the semester, they were asked to respond to two Likert-type rating scales: self as a person and self as a teacher. By use of the usual weighting procedures associated with the Likert scale, it was possible to arrive at a self-concept score for each student at the beginning and at the end of his work as a student teacher. Changes were determined by finding the differences between pretest and posttest scores. Results indicate that positive changes occurred during the student teaching experience for 75 percent of the participants, greater growth in self-concept occurred on the part of off-campus student teachers than was the case with those assigned to the LSU laboratory school, and the mean self-concept changes of student teachers who worked in inner-city schools was in stark contrast to the comparable measures as applied to the group working in suburban schools. (A 14-item bibliography is included.) (MJM)

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Research Report
Volume 2, No. 5

SP 006 321

Published by

Bureau of Educational Materials and Research
College of Education
Louisiana State University

November, 1972

FILMED FROM BEST AVAILABLE COPY

CHANGES IN SELF-CONCEPT DURING THE STUDENT TEACHING EXPERIENCE

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Student teaching has long been accepted as a vital component in teacher education programs. As a culminating experience, it functions as a "maturing" activity. Also, it provides a setting in which the student teacher often functions in the role of self-critic. Hence, because of its very nature, student teaching is likely to bring about changes in the way a student views himself. Furthermore, there has always been a great deal of speculation about the factors involved in self-concept changes during student teaching. (Wynoka, 1970, Kracht, 1968) It is held by some that the student teacher should be placed in a "good" school where the children learn easily so that he (the student teacher) will receive positive reinforcement for his initial teaching effort. Others maintain that the student teacher be placed in a "realistic" school situation so that he will receive experience more similar to his first position as a teacher. (Cumming, 1971, Munson, 1971) Which is better? How does the student teaching experience affect the student teacher?

This paper represents an initial investigation into the effect of the student teaching experience on self-concept.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The problem investigated may be stated in terms of these questions:

1. Is there a measurable change in concept of self as a person and self as a teacher during the student teaching experience?

2. Is any measurable change in the above self-concepts associated with sex, grade level of teaching assignment, or location of assignment?

PROCEDURE

Using a variety of student teaching rating scales as a point of departure, the authors developed two Likert-type scales: self as person and self as teacher. These scales consisted of 25 items each. They were refined in the following manner.

Thirty statements dealing with each approach to self-concept were generated. The statements were administered to approximately 100 student teachers who were enrolled in various sections of an undergraduate measurement course. Each statement was then checked for response spread and discrimination power. Responses had to be spread over at least four categories of a five-point scale for the statement to be accepted. Discrimination power of each statement was checked by selecting the top and bottom 27% of the papers according to total score and obtaining a discrimination index. Statements with a negative to zero discrimination index were eliminated. The refined scales were then typed, mimeographed and administered as follows.

In the spring semester, 1971-1972, a total of 260 students were enrolled in the student teaching courses in the College of Education, Louisiana State University, Baton Rouge. At one of their weekly meetings near the beginning of the semester, they were asked to respond to the two rating scales described above. This was timed so that the students completed the scales about the time they were starting their actual teaching.

At the last weekly meeting of the semester, the student teachers again responded to the two rating scales. By use of the usual weighting procedures associated with the Likert scale, it was possible to arrive at self-concept scores for each student at the beginning and at the end of their work as student teachers. Changes were determined by finding the differences between pre-test and post-test scores.

INTERPRETATION OF RESULTS

In the interpretation process, the pre-test and post-test scores on the two scales ("self" and "teacher") were given parallel treatment.

Self as a Person

A gross analysis of the changes in concept of self as a person revealed the following:

Indicated positive change	179 (70%)
Indicated negative change	66 (26%)
Indicated no change	9 (4%)
Total	254

The mean change for the total group was + 4.34, σ = 8.1.

Sex of the student teacher. The respondents to the "self as a person" instruments included 221 females and 33 males. Their responses indicated that:

Mean change for males ..... + 5.94, σ = 6.5
Mean change for females ..... + 4.23, σ = 8.2

While this difference of 1.71 in mean change failed to meet the test of significance at the .05 level, it is of interest as a basis for speculation as to cause.

Grade level of assignment of student teacher. The largest group of student teachers (104) was assigned to elementary classes, while the smallest group (57) worked at the junior high level and 93 worked at the senior high level. The mean changes in concept of self as a person were:

Elementary teachers ..... + 4.15, σ = 8.1
Junior high teachers ..... + 5.20, σ = 7.6
Senior high teachers ..... + 4.54, σ = 8.3

None of these differences met the test of statistical significance. However, the results are somewhat surprising, since elementary students are supposed to "love their teacher" while junior high and senior high students are not noted for this trait.

Location of assignment. Approximately 100 of the student teachers were assigned to the Louisiana State University Laboratory School. This is an on-campus, twelve grade facility, with admission by application. Students at all grade levels pay a nominal tuition fee. The other student teachers work at off-campus schools, all of which are part of the East Baton Rouge Parish system.

The following changes in concept of self as a person were noted:

Mean change for off-campus teachers .... + 4.70, σ = 8.9
Mean change for on-campus teachers ..... + 3.76, σ = 7.1

This difference (.94) was not statistically significant.

The schools to which student teachers were assigned were also classified as inner city or suburban. The analysis of the pre-test and post-test responses indicated that:

Mean change for suburban schools ..... + 4.86, σ = 7.9
Mean change for inner city schools ..... - .50, σ = 7.9

This difference (5.36) was significant at the .01 level of confidence.

Self as a Teacher

An analysis of the total group's responses on the "self as a teacher" scales indicated that:

Experienced positive change 75%
Experienced negative change 21%
Experienced no change 4%

The mean change for the group was + 5.50, σ = 7.8.

Sex of the student teacher. In contrast to the findings in the "self as a person" phase of the study, the female student teachers displayed a greater positive change than did their male counterparts in the area of "self as teacher."

Mean change for males ..... + 5.46, σ = 8.0
Mean change for females ..... + 5.78, σ = 8.0

This difference was not significant at the .05 level.

Grade level of assignment of student. The changes in concept of self as a teacher, in terms of level of assignments, were:

Elementary teachers ..... + 5.42, σ = 6.4
Junior high teachers ..... + 5.06, σ = 8.2
Senior high teachers ..... + 5.78, σ = 9.2

The difference did not meet the test for statistical significance at the .05 level.

Location of assignment. As was mentioned earlier, about 100 student teachers included in this study were assigned to work in the on-campus Laboratory School. The others were assigned to off-campus public schools. The following mean changes in terms of location of assignments were noted:

Mean change for on-campus school ..... + 5.20, σ = 8.6
Mean change for off-campus schools ... + 5.66, σ = 8.1

This difference (.46) was not significant at the .05 level.

Student teachers assigned to suburban schools showed a gain in concept of self as a teacher of + 5.38, σ = 8.1. Those assigned to inner city schools showed a mean gain of + 1.00, σ = 8.5. The difference of 4.38 was significant at the .05 level.

SOME OBSERVATIONS

While most of these findings are self-evident, a few features are worthy of special note.

First, overall, positive changes in self-concept occurred during the student teaching experience. However, approximately one-fourth of the group demonstrated negative changes. It would be interesting to know why this occurred.

Second, greater growth in self-concept occurred on the part of off-campus student teachers than was the case with those assigned to the L.S.U. Laboratory School. Although the differences did not prove to be statistically significant, the fact that they occurred at all raises some challenging questions.

Third, the mean self-concept changes of student teachers who worked in inner city schools was in stark contrast to the comparable measures as applied to the group working in suburban schools. This is an area which needs a great deal of additional study in light of the controversy over "good" versus "realistic" situations for student teachers.

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